DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 290 793 TM 011 033

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TITLE A Descriptive Research Report on the Texas Teacher Appraisal System.
PUB DATE 87
NOTE 6p.
PUB TYPE Reports - General (140)

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS Check Lists; Elementary Secondary Education; Evaluation Methods; *Mastery Learning; State Programs; Teacher Attitudes; Teacher Behavior; *Teacher Evaluation
IDENTIFIERS *Texas Teacher Appraisal System

ABSTRACT

In December of 1986, the Texas State Teachers Association commissioned Educational Evaluation Services, Inc., to conduct a descriptive research study on the appraisal process and mastery learning among teachers in Texas. Data were gathered in each of five representative school districts in five areas: (1) Dallas-Fort Worth; (2) West Texas; (3) San Antonio; (4) Houston; and (5) East Texas. A stratified random sample of school buildings was extracted within each school district, and teachers in each of the elementary, middle, and high schools in the sample were asked to complete the Survey of Teacher Attitudes and the Observation Climate Description Questionnaire. The scores on the Texas Teacher Appraisal System (TTAS), a 71-item check list of teacher behaviors, were placed in the analysis of data elements, and standardized reading test scores of students in the classrooms of the teachers in the sample in Grades 2-8 were added to the analyses. Results indicate that the TTAS is flawed as an instrument to evaluate teacher performance. (TJH)

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A DESCRIPTIVE RESEARCH REPORT ON THE TEXAS TEACHER APPRAISAL SYSTEM

by

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In December, 1986, the Texas State Teachers Association commissioned Educational Evaluation Services, Inc. to conduct a descriptive research study on the appraisal process and mastery learning. Data was gathered in each of five representative school districts in five geographic areas of Texas: (1) Dallas-Fort Worth, (2) West Texas, (3) San Antonio area, (4) Houston area, and (5) East Texas. A stratified random sample of school buildings was extracted within each school district: two elementary schools; two middle schools, or junior high schools; and one senior high school. Teachers in each of the buildings in the sample were asked to complete two instruments: (1) The Survey of Teacher Attitudes (White and Stanley, 1986), and (2) The Observation Climate Description Questionnaire (Haplin and Croft, 1963; 1967).

The scores on the Texas Teacher Appraisal System which the teachers received from their principals in the Fall of 1986 were placed in the analysis of data elements. Standardized reading test scores of students in the classrooms of the teachers in the sample in grades 2-8 were added to the analyses.

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Nine hypotheses were tested with the data from 1592 teachers and reading scores from 20,000 students. Results from the analyses of data generated these inferences and conclusions about the study: (1) The Texas Teacher Appraisal System (TTAS) did not generate data to support the inner reliability of scores, nor the criterion related validity of the instrument. Since the TTAS is a 71 item check list of teacher behaviors, little variance of the checked scores was observed. A factor analysis of the 71 scores plus the EQ points was conducted. The factor analysis of the TTAS responses, however, failed completely because of the lack of variance in the distribution of scores. The total appraisal instrument (TTAS) has 55 items which relate directly to classroom performance of the teachers. The remaining 16 items refer to the professional growth of the teacher and to responsible behavior in the school building, but not necessarily in the classroom. Some of the items permit the observer or rater to add an additional point to the score. This is called an extra quality point or EQ. Most of the teachers in the study had been given a check mark (a positive response) by the school principal for each of the 71 items. In factor analysis, as it is true in any correlation process, it is essential that variance, or standard deviation of scores, be attained. Since statistical analysis did not yield data, no confident interpretation of data could be made. Results from the data analysis infers that a check list type of instrument (TTAS) should not have been chosen for teacher appraisal is the authors of the check list intended to obtain criterion related validity coefficients for the

instrument. A check list of 71 teacher behaviors is acceptable for use in a formative evaluation system, i.e., to help teachers improve their teaching performance. The use of data from the check list in a summative evaluation system to make decisions about merit pay, teaching competence, or teaching excellence cannot be supported by reliable and valid data.

(2) There were no statistical data supporting for the five domains of the TTAS as specified by the Texas Education Agency. The domains or categories in the TTAS have to be interpreted as completely conceptual and conjectural. The inner reliability, or consistency, of the scores from the TTAS was not identified with confidence.

(3) There were no statistical significant data to support the statement that the teachers' TTAS scores and the attitudes of teachers as measured by the Survey of Teacher Attitudes and the Organizational Climate Description Questionnaire.

(4) Based on factor analysis of data from responses to the Survey of Teacher, Attitudes, five major constructs were identified with a high level of confidence: (A) Classroom Evaluation Systems, (B) Teaching and Classroom Learning, (C) Beyond Essential Elements, (D) Salary and Rewards for Teaching, (E) Motivation of Teachers and Students. From the responses given by teachers in the five school districts, it can be inferred with confidence that teachers have defined very clearly what classroom evaluation systems should contain. Teachers indentified 12 strong statements with confidence. The highest agreement among the teachers was their perception that any

evaluation instrument should be reliable and valid, and that it should be used in a formative evaluation system to help improve instruction rather than summatively to decide whether a teacher earns Step 2 of the "Career Ladder." Another strong attitude of the teachers related to the fact that the students' perception of their home-life, economic deprivation, cultural factors, and self discipline have marked effect on classroom learning. The Texas Teacher Appraisal System was perceived to be supportive of a narrow rigid, stereotypic model of classroom teaching. Further, the Texas Teacher Appraisal System did not have items defining the creative and imaginative teacher, nor the critical thinking of teachers.

Teachers demonstrated strong attitudes that merit pay for teachers creates a competitive environment in the schools which is unprofessional. Teachers perceived teaching to be a science and an art, and that they should be teaching more than the essential elements. Mastery learning and mastery management system techniques should not be the sole method for all students. Teachers responded that they are motivated primarily by intrinsic motives such as pride and self esteem, or the love of teaching and helping students.

(5) Teachers perceived the ecology of the school to be of great importance in classroom learning. Based on responses to the Observation Climate Description Questionnaire, there were two major perceptions of school climate:

1. The instructional leader (principal) is the key to the kind of school climate.

2. The teachers' interactions with one another provides the esprit in the school environment. This esprit definitely effects students' achievement. Indirectly, the teachers were reporting that the focus on the competency and motivation of the teachers as the sole determiner of student achievement is all wrong. The principal is the key to teacher morale and student achievement.

Standarized reading test scores in grades 2-8 were not stable enough to make confident inferences about relationships to teacher evaluation scores, or scores derived from teacher attitudes. Student achievement test scores should be collected differently from the methodology in this study.

In summary, the Texas Teacher Appraisal System is seriously flawed as an instrument to be used in a summative evaluation of teacher performance. Teachers support the idea of teacher evaluations, but those evaluations should not promote a "prepared demonstration project". Reliable and valid instruments should be used in evaluation instruction. The TTAS has no known inner reliability or criterion related validity.

The instructional leader (the principal) is the key to school climate and morale of teachers and student. If teachers, administrators, students, and parents will work together, the goals of HB 72 will be accomplished.